

Group II: A brief history of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

During World War II, tens of millions of people died. In addition to those who lost their lives in the fighting, the Nazis in Germany killed millions in cold blood. When the war ended in 1945, the victorious nations met to decide how to prevent such acts from happening again. They formed the United Nations to advance human rights and peace. The United Nations created The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first truly universal human rights document. Eleanor Roosevelt, the woman who led the committee that created this document, stated that the Declaration grants rights for all Mankind. The United Nations also took other steps. One was to create international laws to protect human rights, a process that took almost twenty years. International laws are laws agreed upon by many countries, and so they apply not just in one country but in all the countries that agree to them.



On December 10th, 1948, the United Nations adopted The Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Eleanor Roosevelt holds a copy of the document she helped create.

The countries that belonged to the United Nations also brought these rights to the rest of the world. As a result, the basic laws of many nations today include the rights contained in the Declaration.

<http://www.youthforhumanrights.org/what-are-human-rights/universal-declaration-of-human-rights/introduction.html>

- Two-thirds of countries in the world have abolished the death penalty, but at least 1,591 people were executed in 25 countries in 2006 (the true figure is likely much higher). Ninety-one percent of these executions took place in only six countries: China, Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Sudan, and the United States.
- Governments in several countries monitor the internet use of their citizens, and have censored and imprisoned people for expressing their opinions in emails, blogs, and chatrooms. In China, people have been arrested and charged for contact with U.S. researchers and for using the Internet to spread human rights information

<http://www.facingthefuture.org/IssuesSolutions/HumanRightsEquity/HumanRightsFastFacts/tabid/179/Default.aspx#.UrCRuyfhFIU>

What has the declaration achieved?

Over the past 50 years the Universal Declaration has become a powerful tool in the armoury of those trying to dissuade governments from violating human rights. Many lawyers regard it as part of customary international law. Along with the UN Charter, it has provided the moral and legal basis for United Nations action against violators of human rights.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/226427.stm>



- 1. What is the Declaration of Human Rights?**
- 2. Who created the Declaration?**
- 3. Why is the Declaration important?**
- 4. Are Human Rights accepted everywhere?**